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jc710 U.S. PTO 01/06/00

UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b)

Attorney Docket No. 004444.P003 Total Pages 2

First Named Inventor or Application Identifier Joseph Giordano, III

Express Mail Label No. EL414969921US

jc511 U.S. PTO 09/480731 01/06/00

ADDRESS TO: **Assistant Commissioner for Patents**
Box Patent Application
Washington, D. C. 20231

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. X Fee Transmittal Form
(Submit an original, and a duplicate for fee processing)

2. X Specification (Total Pages 33)
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
- Descriptive Title of the Invention
- Cross References to Related Applications
- Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
- Reference to Microfiche Appendix
- Background of the Invention
- Brief Summary of the Invention
- Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
- Detailed Description
- Claims
- Abstract of the Disclosure

3. X Drawings(s) (35 USC 113) (Total Sheets 7)

4. X Oath or Declaration (Total Pages 3)
   a. X UNSIGNED
   b. ___ Copy from a Prior Application (37 CFR 1.63(d))
   (for Continuation/Divisional with Box 17 completed) **(Note Box 5 below)**
   i. ___ DELETIONS OF INVENTOR(S) Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 CFR 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).

5. ___ Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4b is checked)
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby incorporated by reference therein.

6. ___ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)

7. __ Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission
(if applicable, all necessary)
a. ____ Computer Readable Copy
b. ____ Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
c. ____ Statement verifying identity of above copies

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

8. _____ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & documents(s))
9. _____ a. 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement (where there is an assignee)
__X__ b. Power of Attorney
10. _____ English Translation Document (if applicable)
11. _____ a. Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449
_____ b. Copies of IDS Citations
12. _____ Preliminary Amendment
13. __X__ Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503) (Should be specifically itemized)
14. _____ a. Small Entity Statement(s)
b. Statement filed in prior application, Status still proper and desired
15. _____ Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) (if foreign priority is claimed)
16. __x__ Other: Certificate of mailing with copy of postcard (in duplicate)

17. **If a CONTINUING APPLICATION,** check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:
___ Continuation ____ Divisional ____ Continuation-in-part (CIP)
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18. **Correspondence Address**
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Title: **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATIC PRODUCT LISTING**
Inventor(s): Giordano, III, et al.
Our Reference: 004444.P003

Respectfully submitted,

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Paul A. Mendonsa — January 6, 2000
Paul A. Mendonsa — Date:
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"Express Mail" mailing label number: EL414969921US
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Serial/Patent No.: *** Filing/Issue Date: January 6, 2000
Client: drugstore.com (Joseph Giordano, III)
Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATIC PRODUCT LISTING

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Date Mailed: January 6, 2000 Docket Due Date: ***

The following has been received in the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office on the date stamped hereon:

- ☐ Amendment/Response (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Appeal Brief (____ pgs.) (in triplicate)
- ☒ Application - Utility 33 pgs., with cover and abstract)
- ☐ Application - Rule 1.53(b) Continuation (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Application - Rule 1.53(b) Divisional (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Application - Rule 1.53(b) CIP (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Application - Rule 1.53(d) CPA Transmittal (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Application - Design (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Application - PCT (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Application - Provisional (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Assignment and Cover Sheet
- ☒ Certificate of Mailing
- ☒ Declaration & POA (3 pgs.) UNSIGNED
- ☐ Disclosure Docs & Ltr & Copy of Invent's Signed Letter(____pgs)
- ☒ Drawings: 7 # of sheets includes 7 figures
- ☒ Express Mail No. EL414969921US ☒ Check No 7361
- ☐ ____ Month(s) Extension of Time Amt: $768.00
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement & PTO-1449 (____ pgs.) ☐ Check No.____
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- ☐ Power of Attorney (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Preliminary Amendment (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Reply Brief (____ pgs.)
- ☐ Response to Notice of Missing Parts
- ☐ Small Entity Declaration for Indep. Inventor/Small Business
- ☒ Transmittal Letter, in duplicate
- ☒ Fee Transmittal, in duplicate

☒ Other: Certificate of mailing with copy of postcard signed by attorney

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATIC PRODUCT LISTING

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METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATIC PRODUCT LISTING

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to electronic commerce. More particularly, the invention relates to a scheme for providing information related to products previously purchased via electronic commerce.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Recent rapid growth of the World Wide Web has allowed people with Internet access the ability to preview and compare various products using a computer system or other device for accessing the Internet, rather than physically shopping for the products. This convenience has dramatically increased the electronic commerce activity on the World Wide Web. Electronic commerce activity will continue to increase as the number of people having Internet access increases and people become more comfortable with electronic commerce.

Because the physical locations of the products ordered are not connected to the presentation of the products, electronic commerce allows number of products presented to be enormous. Uses can become overwhelmed with the quantity of products available via a single electronic commerce Web page. To make electronic shopping more convenient, electronic commerce Web pages often categorize products. For example, an electronic commerce Web page can have links to beauty products, over the counter drugs, books, herbal remedies, etc. A user can then select the general category of interest before being presented with specific products that are available for purchase.

However, because of the large number of products available, users may not be able to remember the specific products that have been purchased or considered for purchase and users who have purchased may desire to repurchase those products at a later date. To go through the process or relocating those products individually can be a burden to the user. Therefore, what is needed is a scheme for assisting users in selecting and purchasing products electronically.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Methods and apparatuses for assisting on-line purchasing is described. Access to a set of products available for electronic ordering is provided. Products ordered by a user are monitored and recorded. A list of products previously ordered by the user is provided automatically to the user.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention is illustrated by way of example, and not by way of limitation in the figures of the accompanying drawings in which like reference numerals refer to similar elements.

Figure 1 is one embodiment of a network configuration for providing electronic commerce.

Figure 2 is one embodiment of a computer system suitable for use with electronic commerce.

Figure 3 is a block diagram of a World Wide Web based set of electronic commerce pages.

Figure 4 is a flow diagram on one embodiment of a process for providing a list of previously ordered products.

Figure 5 is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a process for generating product feedback.

Figure 6 is one embodiment of an architecture for on-line prescription ordering.

Figure 7 is a conceptual illustration of one embodiment of a prescription ordering process.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Methods and apparatuses for assisting on-line purchasing is described. In the following description, for purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that the invention can be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, structures and devices are shown in block diagram form in order to avoid obscuring the invention.

Reference in the specification to "one embodiment" or "an embodiment" means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the invention. The appearances of the phrase "in one embodiment" in various places in the specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment.

Some portions of the detailed descriptions which follow are presented in terms of algorithms and symbolic representations of operations on data bits within a computer memory. These algorithmic descriptions and representations are the means used by those skilled in the data processing arts to most effectively convey the substance of their work to others skilled in the art. An algorithm is here, and generally, conceived to be a self-consistent sequence of steps leading to a desired result. The steps are those requiring physical manipulations of physical quantities. Usually, though not necessarily, these quantities take the form of electrical or magnetic signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and otherwise manipulated. It has proven convenient at times, principally for reasons of common usage, to refer to these signals as bits, values, elements, symbols, characters, terms, numbers, or the like.

It should be borne in mind, however, that all of these and similar terms are to be associated with the appropriate physical quantities and are merely convenient labels applied to these quantities. Unless specifically stated otherwise as apparent from the following discussion, it is appreciated that throughout the description, discussions utilizing terms such as "processing" or "computing" or "calculating" or "determining" or "displaying" or the like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system, or similar electronic computing device, that manipulates and transforms data represented as physical (electronic) quantities within the computer system's registers and memories into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computer system memories or registers or other such information storage, transmission or display devices.

The invention also relates to apparatus for performing the operations herein This apparatus may be specially constructed for the required purposes, or it may comprise a general purpose computer selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program stored in the computer. Such a computer program may be stored in a machine-readable storage medium, such as, but is not limited to, any type of disk including floppy disks, optical disks, CD-ROMs, and magnetic-optical disks, read-only memories (ROMs), random access memories (RAMs), EPROMs, EEPROMs, magnetic or optical cards, or any type of media suitable for storing electronic instructions, and each coupled to a computer system bus.

The algorithms and displays presented herein are not inherently related to any particular computer or other apparatus. Various general purpose systems may be used with programs in accordance with the teachings herein, or it may prove convenient to construct more specialized apparatus to perform the required method steps. The required

structure for a variety of these systems will appear from the description below. In addition, the present invention is not described with reference to any particular programming language. It will be appreciated that a variety of programming languages may be used to implement the teachings of the invention as described herein.

On-line purchasing of products from an electronic commerce (e.g., a Web page) seller is assisted by providing users with a list of previously purchased products. The list of products can be used for simplified reordering of a product previously purchased. In one embodiment, the list is categorized based on, for example, product type, product category, purchase date, etc. Additional product information can also be provided when a product is selected from the list.

Electronic Commerce System Overview

Figure 1 is one embodiment of a network configuration for providing electronic commerce. Internet 100 provides a global interconnection of computing devices. The configuration of Figure 1 illustrates the Internet as an interconnection medium between various parties; however, any network configuration (e.g., local area network, wide area network, metropolitan area network, Internet, intranet), whether wired or wireless, can be used. Also, any appropriate networking protocol can be used.

Client device 140 and client device 150 represent devices used to access networked resources for a user of the respective client devices. Any number of client devices can be coupled to Internet 100. In one embodiment, client devices 140 and 150 are computer systems; however, other devices can also be used. For example, client devices 140 and/or 150 can be "set-top boxes" or "Internet terminals" such as a

WebTV™ terminal available from Sony Electronics, Inc. of Park Ridge, New Jersey, or a set-top box using a cable modem to access a network such as the Internet.

Alternatively, client devices 140 and/or 150 can be "dumb" terminals or thin client devices such as the ThinSTAR™ available from Network Computing Devices, Inc. of Mountain View, California. In another alternative embodiment, client devices 140 and/or 150 can be hand held electronic devices, for example, personal digital assistants (PDAs), cellular telephones, pagers, or other electronic devices that provide network access.

Web farm 120 represents any configuration of servers that provide access to electronic resources such as, for example, Web pages, databases. In one embodiment Web farm 120 includes multiple Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) servers that provide electronic commerce Web pages to client devices 140 and/or 150. Any configuration that provides access to electronic resources using any appropriate protocol can be used.

Figure 2 is one embodiment of a computer system suitable for use with the invention. The computer system illustrated in Figure 2 is intended to represent a range of computer systems. Alternative computer systems can include more, fewer and/or different components.

Computer system 200 includes bus 201 or other communication device to communicate information, and processor 202 coupled to bus 201 to process information. While computer system 200 is illustrated with a single processor, computer system 200 can include multiple processors and/or co-processors. Computer system 200 further includes random access memory (RAM) or other dynamic storage device 204 (referred to as main

memory), coupled to bus 201 to store information and instructions to be executed by processor 202. Main memory 204 also can be used to store temporary variables or other intermediate information during execution of instructions by processor 202.

Computer system 200 also includes read only memory (ROM) and/or other static storage device 206 coupled to bus 201 to store static information and instructions for processor 202. Data storage device 207 is coupled to bus 201 to store information and instructions. Data storage device 207 such as a magnetic disk or optical disc and corresponding drive can be coupled to computer system 200.

Computer system 200 can also be coupled via bus 201 to display device 221, such as a cathode ray tube (CRT) or liquid crystal display (LCD), to display information to a computer user. Alphanumeric input device 222, including alphanumeric and other keys, is typically coupled to bus 201 to communicate information and command selections to processor 202. Another type of user input device is cursor control 223, such as a mouse, a trackball, or cursor direction keys to communicate direction information and command selections to processor 202 and to control cursor movement on display 221.

Network interface 230 provides an interface between computer system 200 and an external network (not shown in Figure 2). Network interface 230 can be, for example, a network interface card (NIC) or any other type of network interface capable of providing network access to computer system 200.

In one embodiment, computer system 200 provides a customized list of products previously ordered by a customer. According to one embodiment, at least a portion of the list of previously ordered products is provided by computer system 200 in response to processor 202 executing sequences of instructions contained in main memory 204.

Multiple computer systems, such as computer system 200, can be used. For example, a server device and a client device can both be computer systems.

Instructions are provided to main memory 204 from a storage device, such as magnetic disk, a read-only memory (ROM) integrated circuit (IC), CD-ROM, DVD, via a remote connection (e.g., over a network), etc. In alternative embodiments, hard-wired circuitry can be used in place of or in combination with software instructions to provide on-line prescription ordering. Thus, the on-line prescription ordering is not limited to any specific combination of hardware circuitry and software instructions.

Figure 3 illustrates one embodiment of a configuration for providing a set of World Wide Web electronic commerce pages. Starting page 300 provides a starting page for users of an electronic commerce site. Starting page 300 can be different for different users to provide a more customized experience for the user or starting page 300 can be the same for all users. In one embodiment, starting page 300 is a Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) document; however, any appropriate programming language can be used.

Starting page 300 can receive user information from user database 350. In one embodiment, user database 350 stores information (e.g., name, address, preference information, previous order information) related to users of the electronic commerce site. User information can be retrieved from user database 350 based on, for example, using a "cookie" stored on the user's computer system to identify which user to retrieve information for, or alternatively, based on a login procedure.

In general, a cookie is information that a Web server stores on a client device to provide information to the server at a later time. A cookie can, for example, provide

identification information, preferences, or similar information to the server when the client device subsequently contacts the server. The cookie can be used to identify a user and the corresponding information can be retrieved from user database 350 and used without requiring the user to enter information that had previously been provided.

From starting page 300, a user can navigate to one of several category pages (e.g., 310, 320, 330). In one embodiment, the category pages provide information (e.g., photographs, prices, manufacturer) related to various products offered for sale through the electronic commerce site. In one embodiment, product information is provided in response to user requests by product database 340, which can be implemented in any manner known in the art. Also, although not shown in Figure 3, product database 340 can also provide information to starting page 300.

Category pages are not required; however, some organization of information that a user can navigate may provide a better experience for the user. Starting page 300 can also provide links to multiple related Web pages, rather than categories. For example, starting page 300 can operate as an electronic commerce "mall" and provide links to more specific electronic commerce sites (e.g., clothing, jewelry, electronics).

In one embodiment, user database 350 maintains a record of products previously purchased by various users as well as other useful information. In one embodiment, one or more products previously purchased are presented to the user in the form of a list. The user can select a product from the list for simplified reordering or for other (e.g., research, pricing) information. The list can be presented in several formats with various categorizations. The following are some, but not all, of the formats and categorizations in which the list of products can be presented.

The list of products can be presented as a pull-down/pop-up menu, as a menu item, as a linked document, or in any other format. When the list of products is presented to the user, the list includes all of the products previously purchased, all of the products previously purchased within a predetermined time period, a predetermined number of products. The products included in the list can be categorized in any manner, selected categories of products can be presented, etc. Any other useful categorization can also be used.

The user can select one or more of the products from the list for reordering. In one embodiment, shipping information (e.g., address, shipping method, payment method) are verified in response to a product being selected and the server causes the product to be ordered and shipped to the user. If the shipping information has changed or is inaccurate, the user can modify the shipping information as needed.

In one embodiment, customized product list page 370 is compiled from product database 340 and user database 350 for each user that accesses starting page 300. Customized product list page 370 includes information related to previous purchases. For example, customized product list page 370 can list all products previously purchased by a particular user, either in a categorized (e.g., by product category, by date, by price) format or an uncategorized format. Customized product list page 370 can also include additional information such as, for example, products the user intends to purchase in the future, or products that the user wishes to research. A customized product listing can also be provided to the user in a different format, for example, the listing can be in the form of a menu or any other format.

Server 360 operates in conjunction with product database 340 and user database 350 to provide starting page 300 and multiple category pages with product information and user information as described above.

Automatic Product Listing

Figure 4 is a flow diagram on one embodiment of a process for providing a list of previously ordered products. A server provides a starting page and determines a user at 410. In one embodiment, the user accesses the starting page via a browser application such as, for example, Internet Explorer® available from Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, Washington, or Navigator® available from Netscape Communications of Mountain View, California. The identity of the user can be determined by, for example, use of a cookie stored on an electronic system running the browser application, or by a login procedure.

The server determines whether the user is a first-time user at 420. In one embodiment, a cookie is used to determine whether the user is a first-time user. In alternate embodiments, the user can supply a user name and/or password, a card identifying the user, or any other manner of determining the identity of the user. If no information is available indicating whether the user is a first-time user, the user is treated as a first-time user at 420.

If the user is not a first-time user at 420, the user's previous orders are determined at 430. In one embodiment, a user database is maintained to record orders by users as well as other useful information related to the user. In alternate embodiments, the previous purchase information can be stored, for example, by the user's electronic device

(e.g., computer system, personal digital assistant, set-top box) running a browser application, or by any other manner.

In one embodiment, the server compiles a list of the user's previous orders at 440. In alternate embodiments, the user's electronic device or another electronic device can be used to compile the list of previous orders. In one embodiment, the list is compiled as an HTML document; however, other document types can also be used.

In one embodiment, the list is categorized at 450; however, categorization of the list is optional. The list can be categorized by date, type of product ordered, products currently searched for, or in any other appropriate manner.

The products available for ordering are provided at 460. If the user is a first-time user at 420, the list compilation (e.g., 430-450) is skipped for that user and the products are presented. If the user is not a first-time user, the list of previously ordered products is also provided with the list, which can be accessible, for example, as a menu or as an HTML link. Any orders made by the user are processed at 470.

In one embodiment, the list of products previously purchased is analyzed for repeat purchases. Information related to repeat purchases (e.g., the number of times ordered, other comparable products/formats) can be presented to the user. In one embodiment, the frequency of purchases are tracked for one or more products for a user.

When the time for reorder is near, a reminder (e.g., an electronic mail message) can be sent to the user to remind the user to reorder the product. In one embodiment, server 360 sends the reminder; however, any device can be used to track products and send reminders. Tracking of purchase patterns with or without reminder messages can be provided for both prescription and non-prescription products. For use with a prescription

product, the user can be allowed to authorize a refill of the prescription by responding to the reminder so that the prescription is filled and ready for the user when the previously purchased product is depleted.

Generating Product Feedback

Figure 5 is a flow diagram of one embodiment of a process for generating product feedback. In one embodiment, the process of Figure 5 is performed by a server device that also provides an electronic commerce Web site; however, the process can be performed by other devices, for example, an electronic device coupled to the server that provides the electronic commerce Web site.

The server determines whether a user is a registered user at 510. Requiring a user to be a registered user is not necessary; however, requiring the user to be a registered user allows the process of Figure 5 to be performed in a more transparent manner to the user and allows more efficient tracking of feedback. If the user is not a registered user at 510, the user is allowed to register at 515 to be eligible to receive samples. To register, a user can provide identifying information (e.g., name, address), demographic information (e.g., gender, age), or other useful information.

If the user is registered at 510, the server determines whether the user is eligible for samples at 520. User eligibility can be determined based on, for example, demographic information, the number of samples of the product previously distributed, the number of samples previously received by the user, the user's history with respect to providing timely feedback, or any other criteria. If the user is not eligible to receive samples at 520, the user is informed that he/she is ineligible to receive samples.

The sample program to be provided to the user is determined at 530. Use of the phrase "sample program" refers to a procedure or process by which products are provided to purchasers or potential purchasers for evaluation purposes. In one embodiment, a user is presented with products available for sampling and can "sign up" or apply for the sampling program. From a group of applicants, users that meet a predetermined profile are selected for the sampling program. For example, server 360 can select users for the sampling program based on predetermined criteria (e.g., age, geographical location, other products purchased).

Various other sampling programs can be implemented based on, for example, the type of product sampled, the user receiving sample, etc. Smaller products (e.g., soap, pencils) can be provided at little or no cost to the user to sample. Larger, more expensive products (e.g., exercise equipment, computer hardware) can be loaned to the user for a predetermined period of time. Multiple sample programs can be applied to a single product based on, for example, the amount of time remaining in a sampling program, the user demographics, etc.

The server causes the sample(s) to be shipped to the selected users at 540. In one embodiment, the server sends a notification to a shipping center indicating one or more products should be shipped to a specific user at a specific address. The notification can be generated and communicated in any appropriate manner. In one embodiment, the notification is electronic mail. In alternate embodiments, an order processing process used for general processing of orders is used.

Feedback is solicited at 550. In one embodiment, a link to a form is automatically sent (e.g., by server 360) by electronic mail a predetermined time period (e.g., 10 days) to

users that have received samples. In one embodiment, the feedback is in an electronic form that is electronically mailed to the user receiving the samples. In alternate embodiments, the feedback is an electronic form that is provided by the server that provides the electronic commerce Web page or by another electronic device. The feedback can also be an independent hardcopy of a questionnaire that is shipped with the samples or send to the user independent of the samples. Solicitation of feedback can also include reminder notifications, such as electronic mail messages, that remind the user to provide feedback.

The feedback provided by the user is recorded and/or presented at 560. In one embodiment, all feedback provided by various users is processed to provide the electronic commerce retailer with information related to the product. Complete and/or edited versions of feedback provided by the users can be presented by the electronic commerce Web site so that subsequent users can have access to the feedback provided by the users that received the samples.

Prescription Ordering

Figure 6 is one embodiment of an architecture for on-line prescription ordering. The architecture assumes a World Wide Web based electronic commerce site for ordering prescriptions. As described above, Web farm 120 includes one or more Web servers that provide the electronic commerce site. Any appropriate configuration can be used for Web farm 120.

Front end data store 600 provides and receives data from Web farm 120. In one embodiment, front end data store 600 stores four types of data: (1) catalog data, (2) pharmacy data, (3) user data, and (4) order data. In alternate embodiments, front end data

store can store additional and/or different types of data. In one embodiment, servers included in Web farm 120 read and write data to front end data store 600, but the servers do not initiate processes on other devices.

Catalog data is data related to over-the-counter products available from the electronic commerce Web site and includes such information as, for example, categories to which the products belong, brand information for the products, ingredient lists, pricing information. The servers of Web farm 120 can read catalog data from front end data store 600 to provide product information to users of the electronic commerce Web site. In Figure 3, catalog data is illustrated as stored in a separate database (product database 340); however, the catalog data can be stored in a separate database or a combined database.

Pharmacy data is data related to prescription products available from the electronic commerce Web site and includes such information as, for example, drug names, dosage information, overdoes information, missed dose information, pricing information. The servers of Web farm 120 can read the pharmacy data from front end data store 600 to provide prescription drug information to users of the electronic commerce Web site.

User data is data related to users of the electronic commerce Web site and can include information such as, for example, user name, password, patient information for individuals other than the user (e.g., spouse, child). In Figure 3, user data is illustrated as a separate database (user database 350); however, the user data can be stored in a separate database or a combined database. The user data can be used for security, ordering, or other purposes.

Order data is related to current and/or past orders. In one embodiment, order data includes information related to pending orders, both prescription and non-prescription orders, as well as information related to orders place during a previous predetermined period of time (e.g., one year, six months). The order data can be used, for example, to allow a user to track a particular order electronically.

Front end server 610 communicates with front end data store 600 to process orders and to update catalog data and pharmacy data. In one embodiment, merchandising database 620 is used to maintain merchandising information such as, for example, purchase orders, inventory, and/or other information. Front end server 610 can use merchandising database 620 to update front end data store 600 so that Web farm 120 presents accurate information to users.

In one embodiment, front end server 610 periodically executes a batch process to search front end data store 600 for new orders. Front end server 610 analyzes the order data to determine whether new orders have been placed since the last batch has been run. New order data is copied from front end data store 600 and forwarded to back end server 630. One embodiment of order processing is described in greater detail below.

Back end server 630 operates with front end server 610 to process orders for both prescription and non-prescription products. In one embodiment, back end server 630 shields from end server 610 from slower communications links to various billing and/or distribution centers. In an alternate embodiment, the functionality of front end server 610 and back end server 630 can be combined.

Back end server 630 forwards billing information to billing server 640. Billing information can include, for example, credit card numbers, insurance information, user

identification information, shipping and/or billing addresses, and/or any other useful information. Billing serer 640 performs billing operations based on the information provided by back end server 630. In one embodiment, billing server 640 contacts the appropriate credit card company to process a credit card payment.

In one embodiment, back end server 630 separates orders into prescription orders and non-prescription orders. Orders that include both prescription and non-prescription components are divided into one or more prescription sub-orders and non-prescription sub-orders. In one embodiment, prescription orders and sub-orders are forwarded to prescription distribution center(s) 660, which represents one or more physical distribution facilities that ships prescription products. As described in greater detail below, prescription distribution center(s) 660 obtain information required to fill the prescription order. Non-prescription orders and sub-orders are forwarded to over-the-counter (OTC) distribution center(s), which represents one or more physical distribution facilities that ships non-prescription products.

In one embodiment, communications to and from back end server 630 and between front end server 610 and merchandising database 620 are accomplished using a reliable, in-order, packetized messaging protocol. In one embodiment, communication is accomplished using Microsoft MessageQueue links; however, other protocols can also be used.

Figure 7 is a conceptual illustration of one embodiment of a prescription ordering process. In one embodiment prescription ordering is processed by three devices: a front end server, a back end server, and a distribution center. In alternate embodiments, prescription ordering can be processed by different devices, for example, a front end

server and a distribution center. In one embodiment, the message processing of Figure 7 is accomplished using Microsoft MessageQueue links; however, other protocols can also be used.

The front end server generates a new patient message in response to a prescription order being placed. In one embodiment, a Web server writes a prescription order to a front end data store, and the front end server periodically polls the front end data store to determine whether new prescription orders have been placed. The new patient message is sent to the back end server, which routes the new patient message to an appropriate distribution center. In one embodiment, the distribution center is determined based on the shipping address associated with the prescription order, the geographical location of the distribution center and the inventory of the distribution center. The distribution center closest to the shipping address is selected.

The distribution center processes the new patient message and generates either a new patient acknowledge message or a new patient failure message. The new patient acknowledge message is generated if the distribution center successfully processes the new patient message. In one embodiment, the new patient acknowledge message includes a patient identifier (DC_PATIENT_ID) that is used in subsequent messages. The new patient failure message is generated if the distribution center cannot successfully process the new patient message because, for example, information is missing or incorrect. In one embodiment, the new patient failure message includes codes indication the reason for failure; however, failure codes are not necessary.

The new patient acknowledge message or new patient failure message is sent to the back end server, which routes the message to the front end server. The front end

server takes the appropriate action in response to receiving the new patient acknowledge message or the new patient failure message. If the front end server receives the new patient failure message, the front end server notifies the party placing the prescription order that the order has failed. In one embodiment, information from the failure message is written to the front end data store by the front end server; however, notification can be provided in another manner (e.g. electronic mail message).

In response to the new patient acknowledge message, the front end server generates a medical data message including the patient identifier from the new patient acknowledge message. In one embodiment, the medical data message includes allergen information related to the patient, currently prescribed medications, and/or current medical condition. Other information can be provided in addition to, or rather than, this information. In one embodiment, each type of medical data (e.g., allergens, current condition, current medications) is processed using a separate medical data message; however, multiple types of data can be processed by a single medical data message.

The medical data message is sent to the back end server, which routes the medical data message to the appropriate distribution center. The distribution center processes the medical data message and generates a medical data acknowledge message or a medical data failure message. The medical data acknowledge message or the medical data failure message is sent to the back end server, which routes the message to the front end server.

In one embodiment, the new patient message processing and the medical data processing is referred to herein as patient data processing. In one embodiment, subsequent message processing assumes that the patient data processing has been accomplished and the patient identifier is used for subsequent processing. Patient data

processing is performed prior to subsequent processing because proper pharmacy practice is to receive all relevant patient medical data prior to dispensing a prescription drug.

In response to successful patient data processing, the front end server generates an insurance message as part of insurance processing. The insurance processing is optional. In one embodiment, the insurance message includes the patient identifier. The insurance message includes insurance information (e.g., insurance carrier, plan number, group number) for the individual for which the prescription is placed.

In one embodiment, the insurance message includes insurance card information and relationship information. The insurance card information is the information used to determine insurance coverage (e.g., carrier name, card holder name, member ID, group number, plan name/number) and the relationship information indicates the relationship of the individual for which the prescription is placed to the card holder (e.g., self, spouse, child). The card information and the relationship information can be processed together or independently.

The insurance message is sent to the back end server, which routes the insurance message to the appropriate distribution center. The distribution center processes the insurance message and generates either an insurance acknowledge message or an insurance failure message. In one embodiment, the insurance failure message includes codes indicating the cause of the failure. In one embodiment, the insurance acknowledge message includes an insurance identifier (DC_INS_ID) that is used to identify insurance coverage for the associated prescription order.

The insurance acknowledge message or the insurance failure message is sent to the back end server, which routes the insurance acknowledge message or the insurance

failure message to the front end server. In one embodiment, processing of the insurance message is accomplished before subsequent message processing is started; however, overlap of message processing can be supported.

In response to completion of the insurance message processing, the front end server generates a prescription data message. In one embodiment, the prescription data message includes information used for prescription processing (e.g., doctor name and/or phone number, pharmacy name and/or phone number, prescription number, transfer information). In one embodiment, the prescription data is free form text that is interpreted by a human operator; however, automated processing can also be supported. The prescription data can be used, for example, to acquire prescriptions from a pharmacy, a doctor's office, etc.

The prescription data message is sent to the back end server, which routes the prescription data message to the appropriate distribution center. The distribution center processes the prescription data message. In response, the distribution center generates a success or a failure message that is sent to the back end server. In one embodiment, the failure message includes failure codes that indicate the cause of the failure. In alternate embodiments, failure codes are not used.

In one embodiment, the success message includes a prescription number that is used to refer to the prescription in subsequent messages. The success message can also include additional information such as, for example, the National Drug Code, quantity information, refill information, prescription label information, dosage information, strength information, packaging information, pricing information, usage instructions,

doctor name, number, and/or phone number. In one embodiment, the success message information is also stored in a prescription table for later use.

The success or failure message is forwarded to the front end server by the back end server. In response to a failure message, the front end server notifies the ordering party that a problem exists with the prescription order. In one embodiment, the front end server writes a failure notification to the front end data store, which is used to notify the ordering party; however, other notification schemes can also be used.

In one embodiment, in response to a success message, the front end server generates a "pre-fill" order to cause order processing to proceed prior to completion of the financial side of the transaction. The pre-fill procedure can be used to cause a drug utilization review, a substitution review, and/or an insurance adjudication.

The drug utilization review is a procedure in which the pharmacy analyzes the current medical condition of the individual receiving the prescription, the medical history of the person, any other drugs being used by the person and any other relevant factors to determine whether the prescribed drug is safe. The substitution review determines whether the person will receive a name brand medication or a generic equivalent of the name brand medication. The insurance adjudication causes the insurance company to determine benefits, which also determines the payment required from the person ordering the prescription medication. Adjudication can also result in substitution, and may require a doctor's authorization before allowing the prescription to be filled.

The prescription order is sent to the back end server, which forwards the prescription order to the distribution center. The distribution center processes the prescription order and generates a prescription order acknowledge message or a

prescription order failure message. The prescription order acknowledge message or the prescription order failure message includes failure codes indicating the cause of the failure; however, failure codes are not necessary.

In one embodiment, the prescription order acknowledge message indicates the drug that will be dispensed (e.g., name brand or generic), the copay or payment amount required from the ordering party (if any) and any other appropriate information. The prescription order acknowledge or prescription order failure message is sent to the back end server, which forwards the prescription order acknowledge or prescription order failure message to the front end server.

In one embodiment, if the front end server receives a prescription order failure message, a notification is sent to the ordering party. In response to a prescription order acknowledge message, the front end server generates a real order message. The real order message is sent to the back end server, which routes the real order message to the appropriate distribution center. The distribution center processes the real order message and generates a real order acknowledge message or a real order failure message.

The real order acknowledge message or the real order failure message is sent to the back end server. If the back end server receives a real order failure message, the real order failure message is forwarded to the front end server and the front end server notifies the ordering party that the prescription cannot be filled. In one embodiment, the real order failure message includes a failure code that indicates the cause of the failure; however, the failure code is not necessary.

In one embodiment, when the back end server receives a real order acknowledge message, the back end server causes the ordering party's credit card to be charged for the

prescription. In one embodiment, the back end server causes a billing server to process the credit card charge; however, any manner of processing credit card charges can be used.

If the credit card is charged successfully, the back end server generates a success message that is sent to the front end server and a ship order message that is sent to the distribution center. The distribution center ships the prescription order in response to the ship order message. If the credit card is not charged successfully, the back end server generates a failure message that is sent to the front end server and a cancel order message that is sent to the distribution center. The distribution center cancels the order in response to the cancel order message.

In the foregoing specification, the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments thereof. It will, however, be evident that various modifications and changes can be made thereto without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the invention. The specification and drawings are, accordingly, to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

providing access to a set of products available for electronic ordering;

monitoring products ordered by a user; and

providing, automatically, to the user access to a list of products previously ordered.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the list of products previously ordered is categorized.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising reordering a product in response to the product being selected from the list.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein reordering the product further comprises:

determining a location to which the product was previously shipped;

verifying the location; and

causing the reordered product to be shipped to the location;

5. The method of claim 3 further comprising suggesting additional products to the user based on the product selected for reorder.

6. A machine-readable medium having instructions stored thereon to implement an electronic commerce World Wide Web page, the sequences of instructions, when executed by one or more processors, cause one or more electronic systems to:

provide access to a set of products available for electronic ordering;

monitor products ordered by a user; and

provide, automatically, to the user access to a list of products previously ordered.

7. The machine-readable medium of claim 6 wherein the list of products previously ordered is categorized.

8. The machine-readable medium of claim 6 further comprising sequences of instructions that, when executed by the one or more processors, cause the one or more electronic systems to reorder a product in response to the product being selected from the list.

9. The machine-readable medium of claim 8 wherein the sequences of instructions that cause the one or more electronic devices to reorder the product further comprise sequences of instructions that, when executed by the one or more processors, cause the one or more electronic systems to:

determine a location to which the product was previously shipped;

verify the location; and

cause the reordered product to be shipped to the location;

10. The machine-readable medium of claim 8 further comprising sequences of instructions that, when executed by the one or more processors, cause the one or more electronic systems to suggest additional products to the user based on the product selected for reorder.

11. An apparatus comprising:

means for providing access to a set of products available for electronic ordering;

means for monitoring products ordered by a user; and

means for providing, automatically, to the user access to a list of products previously ordered.

12. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the list of products previously ordered is categorized.

13. The apparatus of claim 11 further comprising means for reordering a product in response to the product being selected from the list.

14. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the means for reordering the product further comprises:

means for determining a location to which the product was previously shipped;

means for verifying the location; and

means for causing the reordered product to be shipped to the location;

15. The apparatus of claim 13 further comprising means for suggesting additional products to the user based on the product selected for reorder.

16. A networked server device comprising to provide information related to products available for ordering by a user of a client device coupled to the server, the server device to monitor products ordered by users that access the server device and to record products ordered by the users, wherein the server device provides one or more individual users with a list of products previously ordered by the respective users.

17. The server device of claim 16 wherein the list of products previously ordered is categorized.

18. The server device of claim 16 wherein the server reorders a product in response to the product being selected from the list.

19. The server device of claim 18 wherein the server device reorders the product in response to the product being selected from the list, and determines a location to which the product was previously shipped, verifies the location, and causes the reordered product to be shipped to the location;

20. The server device of claim 18, wherein the server device suggests additional products to the user based on the product selected for reorder.

ABSTRACT

On-line purchasing of products from an electronic commerce (e.g., a Web page) seller is assisted by providing users with a list of previously purchased products. The list of products can be used for simplified reordering of a product previously purchased. In one embodiment, the list is categorized based on, for example, product type, purchase date, etc. Additional product information can also be provided when a product is selected from the list.

docket technologies

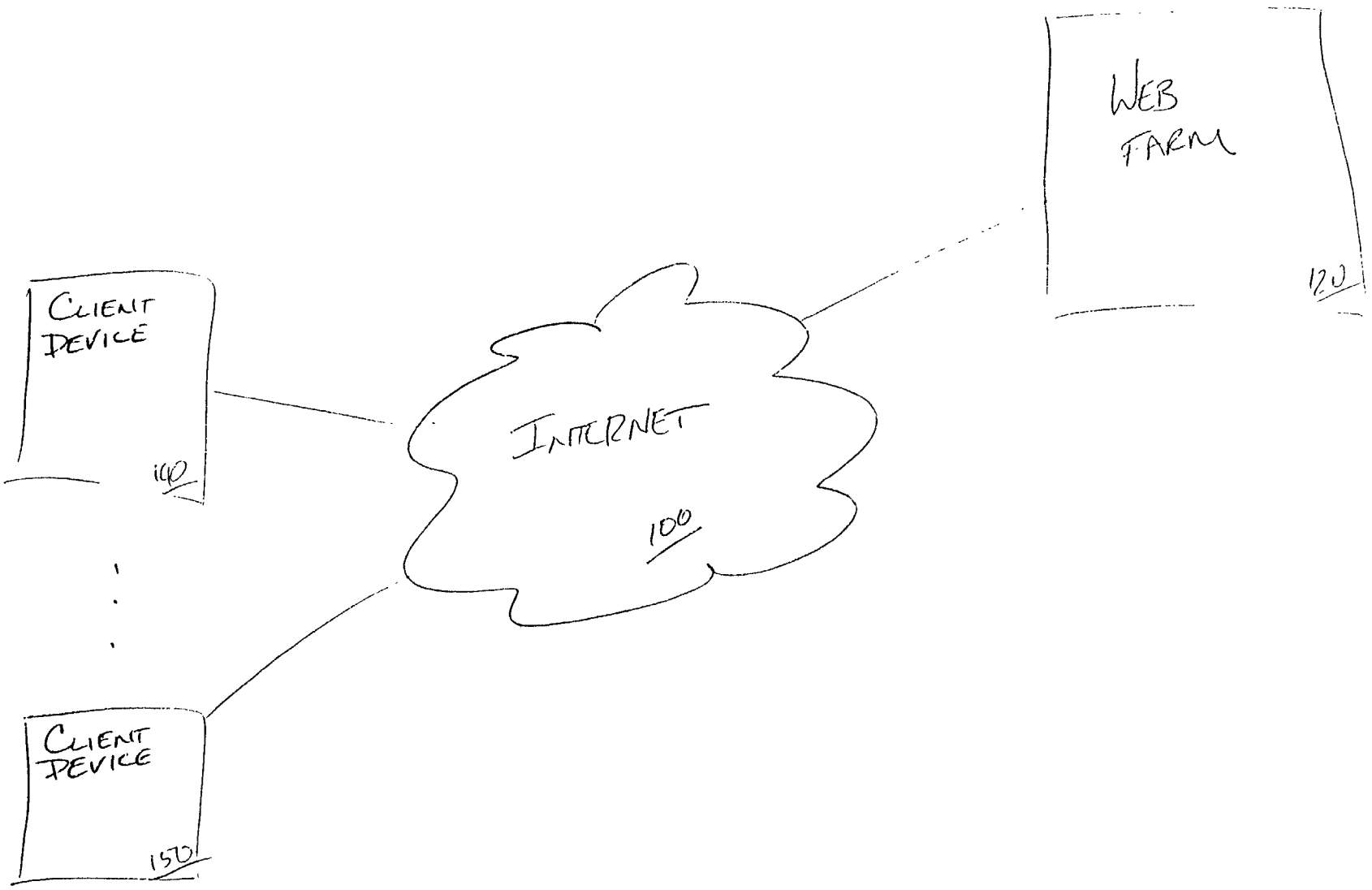


FIG. 1

docket technology

200

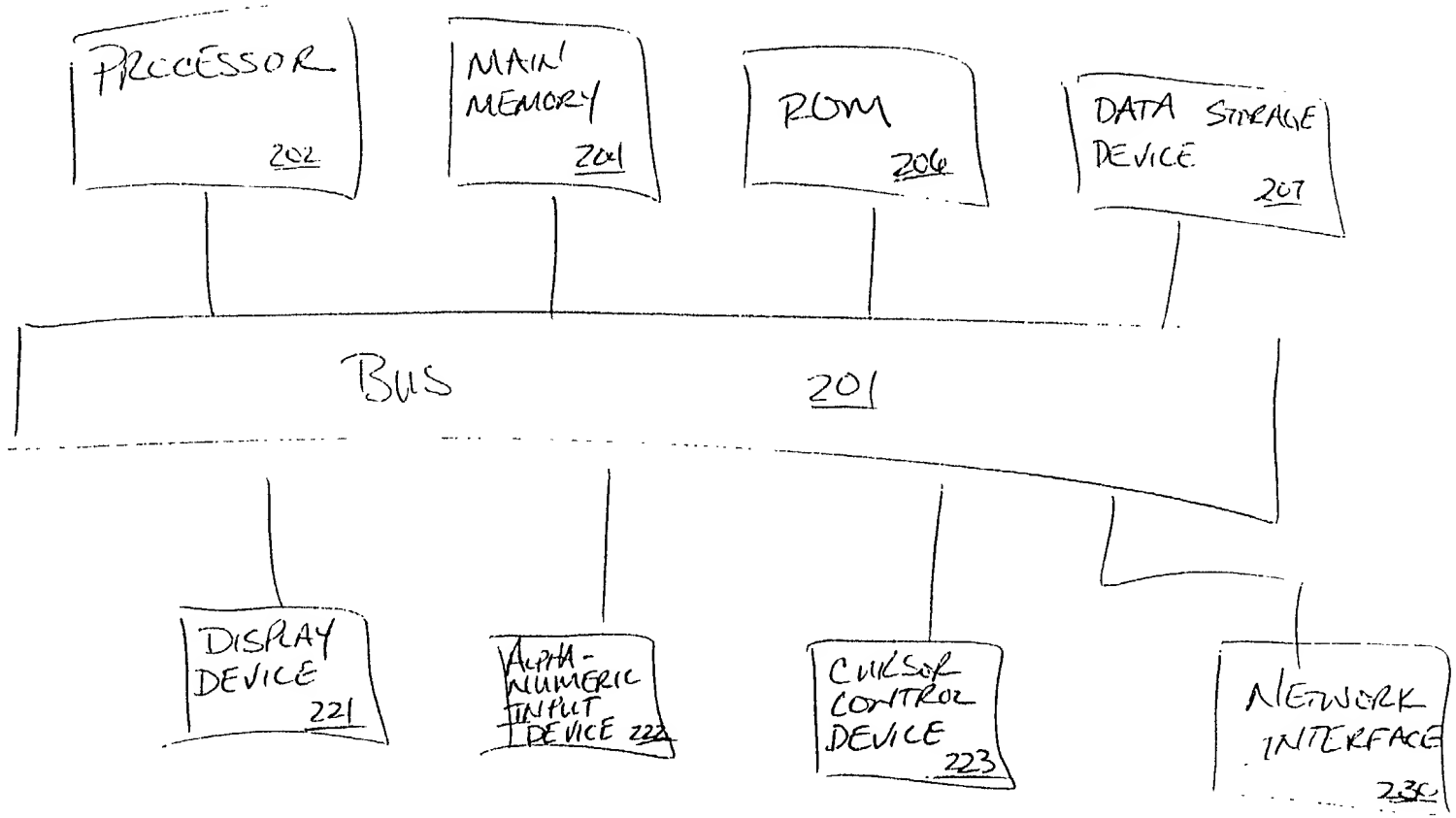


FIG. 2

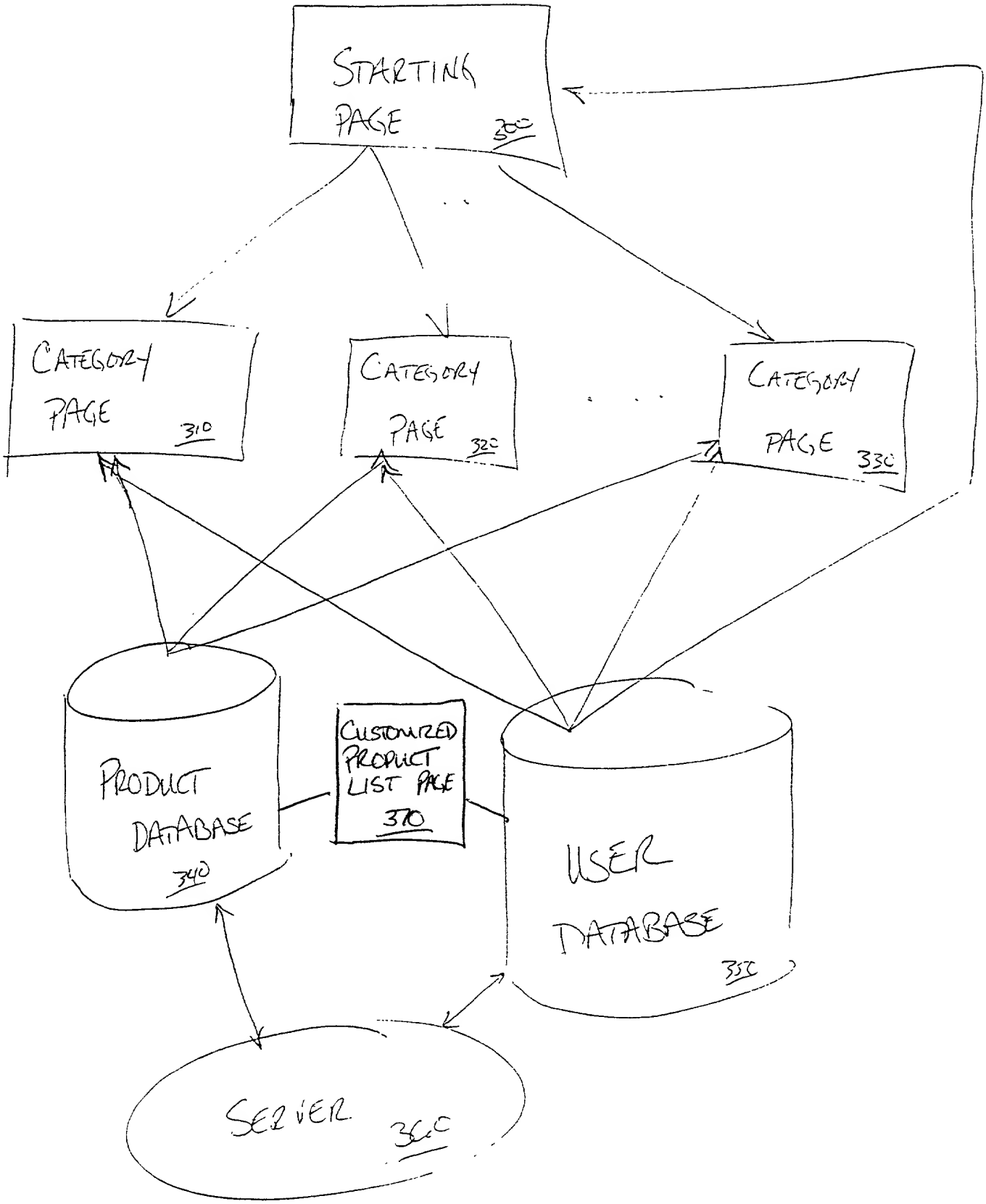
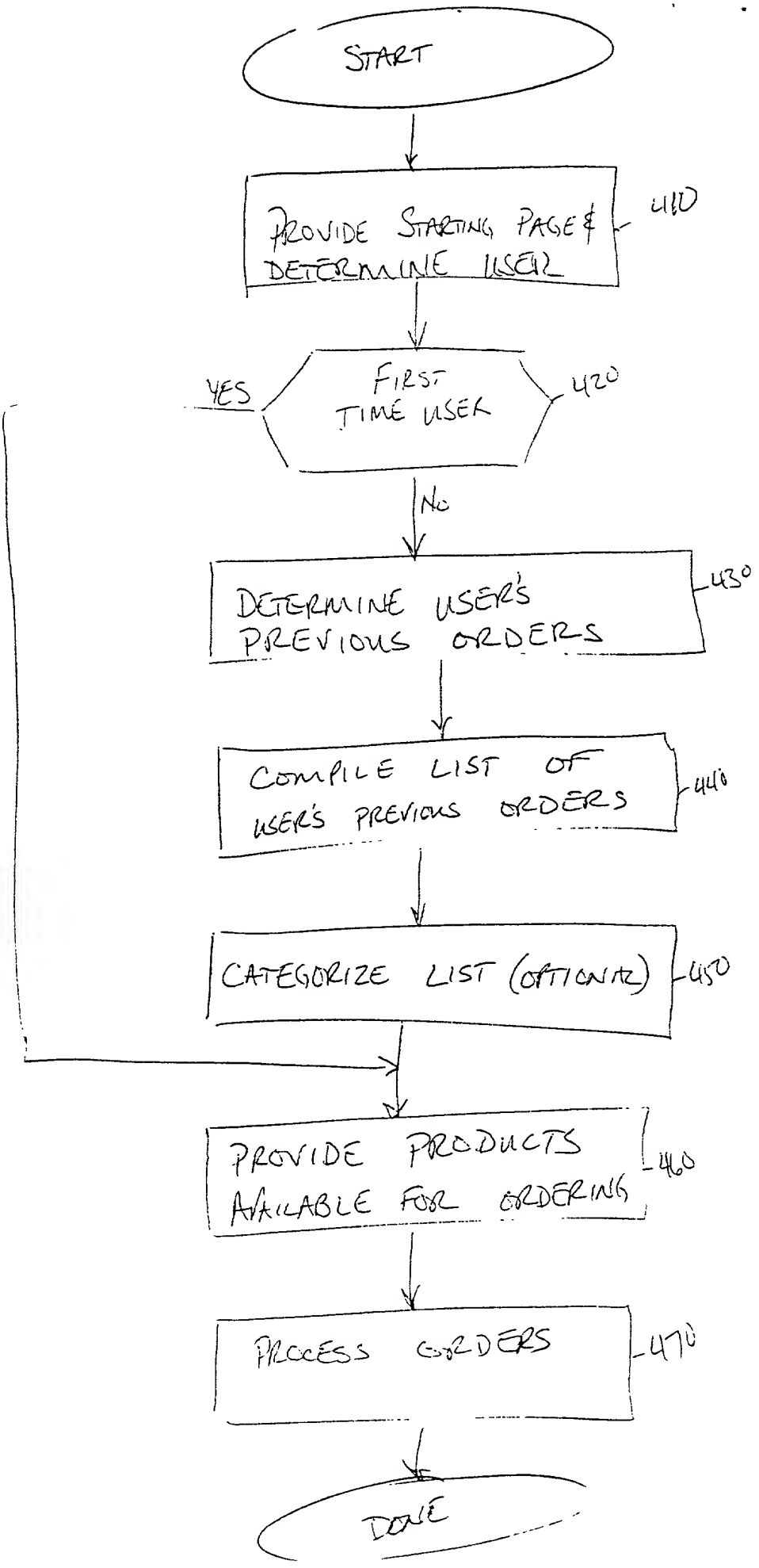

STARTING PAGE 300
CATEGORY PAGE 310
CATEGORY PAGE 320
CATEGORY PAGE 330
PRODUCT DATABASE 340
CUSTOMIZED PRODUCT LIST PAGE 370
USER DATABASE 350
SERVER 360

FIG. 3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PROVIDE STARTING PAGE & DETERMINE USER
410
FIRST TIME USER
420
YES
NO
DETERMINE USER'S PREVIOUS ORDERS
430
COMPILE LIST OF USER'S PREVIOUS ORDERS
440
CATEGORIZE LIST (OPTIONAL)
450
PROVIDE PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FOR ORDERING
460
PROCESS ORDERS
470
DONE

FIG. 4

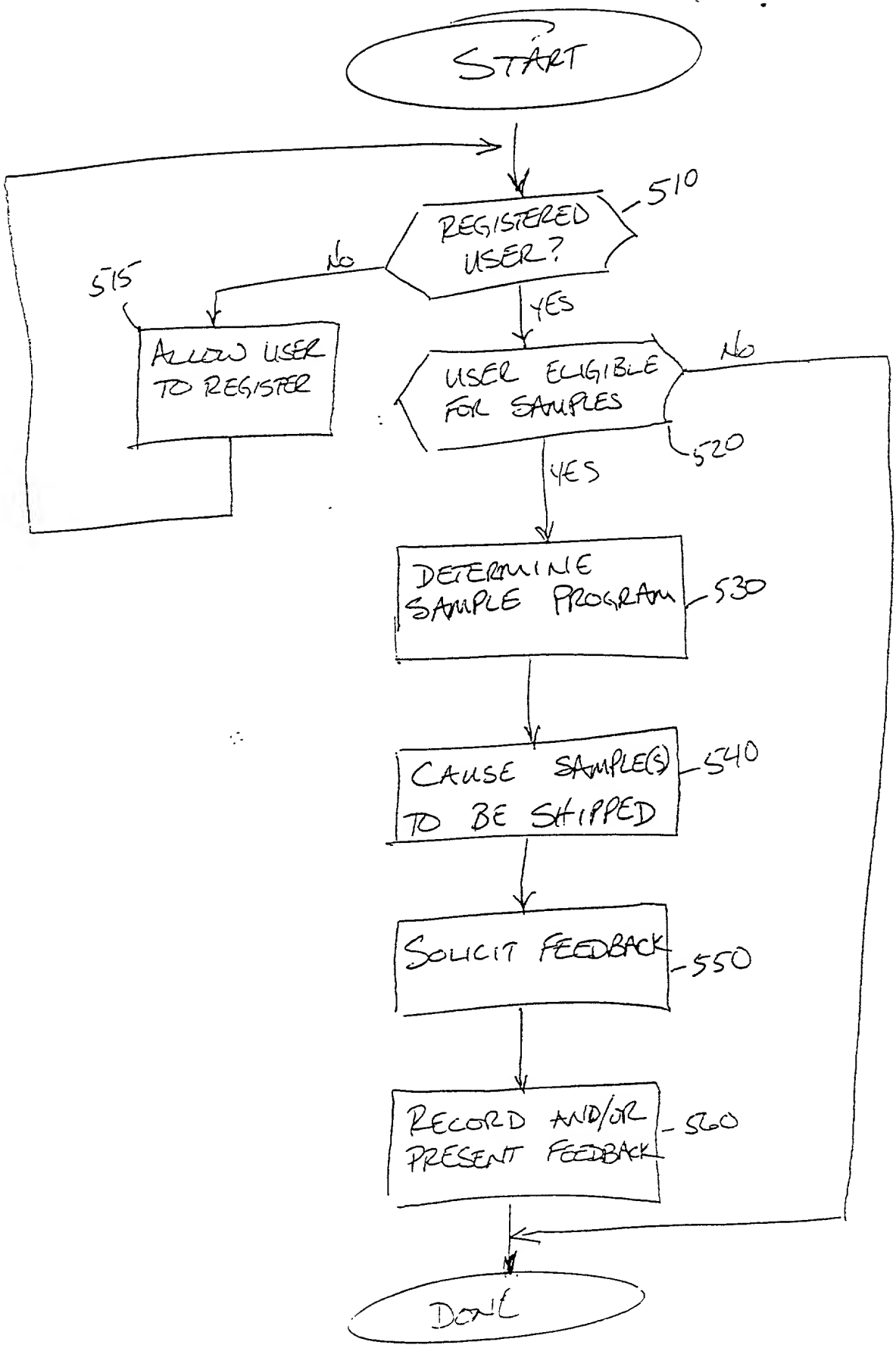

START
REGISTERED USER?
510
No
515
YES
ALLOW USER TO REGISTER
USER ELIGIBLE FOR SAMPLES
No
520
YES
DETERMINE SAMPLE PROGRAM
530
CAUSE SAMPLE(S) TO BE SHIPPED
540
SOLICIT FEEDBACK
550
RECORD AND/OR PRESENT FEEDBACK
560
DONE

FIG. 5

Fig. 6

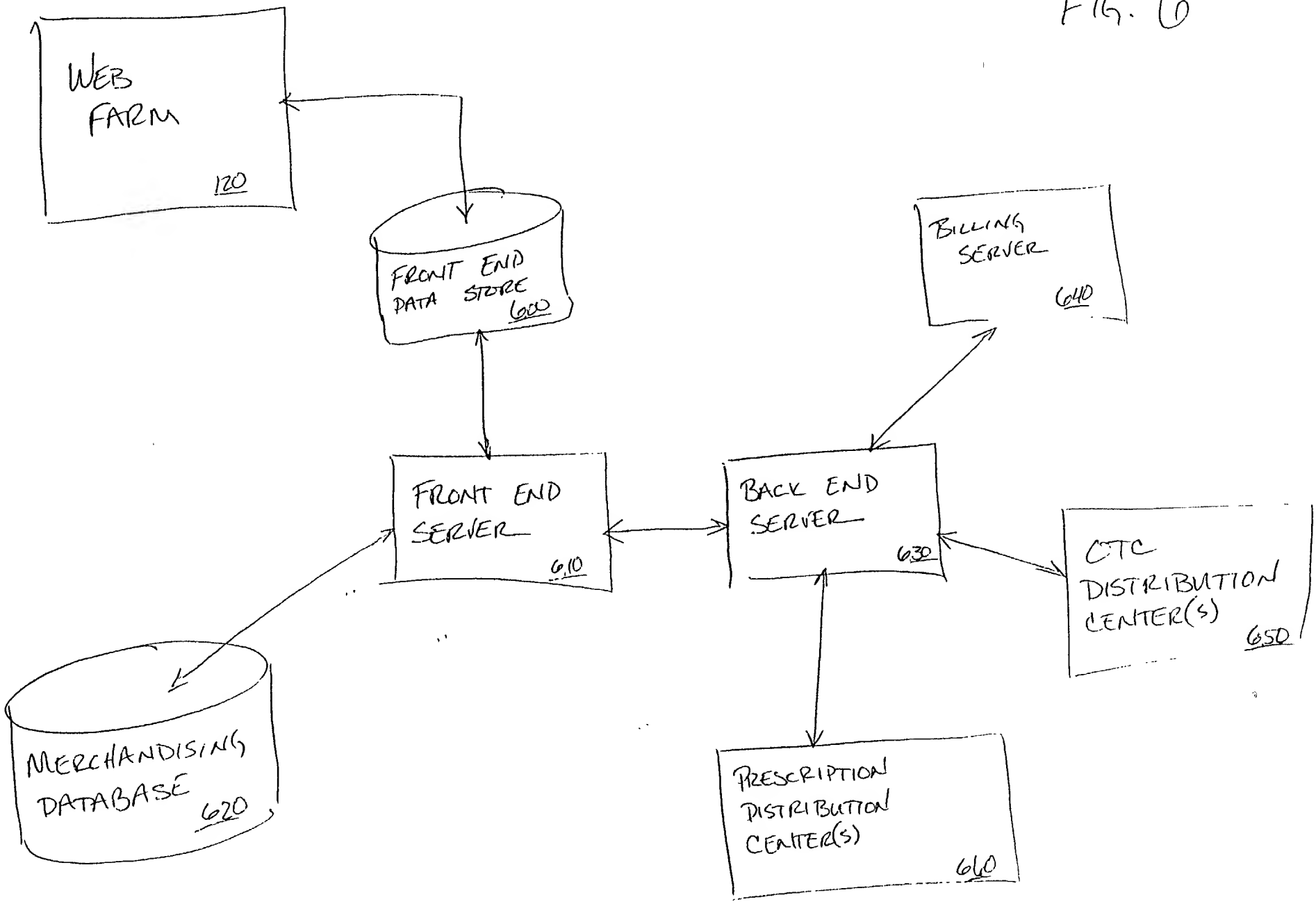
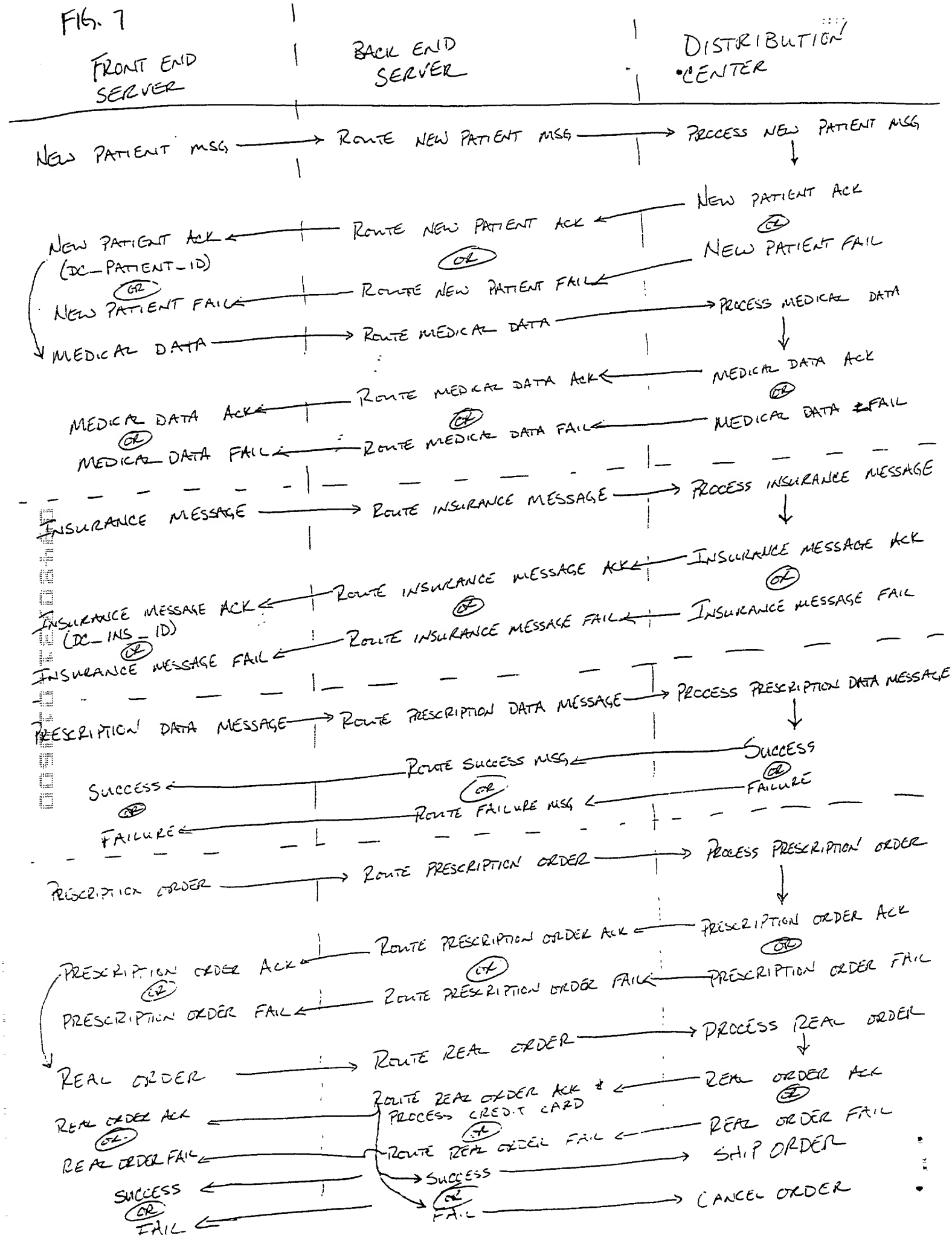

WEB FARM
120
FRONT END DATA STORE
600
BILLING SERVER
640
FRONT END SERVER
610
BACK END SERVER
630
CTC DISTRIBUTION CENTER(S)
650
MERCHANDISING DATABASE
620
PRESCRIPTION DISTRIBUTION CENTER(S)
660

FIG. 7


FRONT END SERVER
BACK END SERVER
DISTRIBUTION CENTER
NEW PATIENT MSG
ROUTE NEW PATIENT MSG
PROCESS NEW PATIENT MSG
NEW PATIENT ACK
ROUTE NEW PATIENT ACK
NEW PATIENT ACK
(DC_PATIENT_ID)
NEW PATIENT FAIL
ROUTE NEW PATIENT FAIL
NEW PATIENT FAIL
MEDICAL DATA
ROUTE MEDICAL DATA
PROCESS MEDICAL DATA
MEDICAL DATA ACK
ROUTE MEDICAL DATA ACK
MEDICAL DATA ACK
MEDICAL DATA FAIL
ROUTE MEDICAL DATA FAIL
MEDICAL DATA FAIL
INSURANCE MESSAGE
ROUTE INSURANCE MESSAGE
PROCESS INSURANCE MESSAGE
INSURANCE MESSAGE ACK
ROUTE INSURANCE MESSAGE ACK
INSURANCE MESSAGE ACK
(DC_INS_ID)
INSURANCE MESSAGE FAIL
ROUTE INSURANCE MESSAGE FAIL
INSURANCE MESSAGE FAIL
PRESCRIPTION DATA MESSAGE
ROUTE PRESCRIPTION DATA MESSAGE
PROCESS PRESCRIPTION DATA MESSAGE
SUCCESS
ROUTE SUCCESS MSG
SUCCESS
FAILURE
ROUTE FAILURE MSG
FAILURE
PRESCRIPTION ORDER
ROUTE PRESCRIPTION ORDER
PROCESS PRESCRIPTION ORDER
PRESCRIPTION ORDER ACK
ROUTE PRESCRIPTION ORDER ACK
PRESCRIPTION ORDER ACK
PRESCRIPTION ORDER FAIL
ROUTE PRESCRIPTION ORDER FAIL
PRESCRIPTION ORDER FAIL
REAL ORDER
ROUTE REAL ORDER
PROCESS REAL ORDER
REAL ORDER ACK
ROUTE REAL ORDER ACK
PROCESS CREDIT CARD
REAL ORDER ACK
REAL ORDER FAIL
ROUTE REAL ORDER FAIL
REAL ORDER FAIL
SHIP ORDER
SUCCESS
SUCCESS
OR
FAIL
FAIL
CANCEL ORDER

Attorney's Docket No.: 004444.P003 PATENT

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PATENT APPLICATION

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below, next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first, and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first, and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATIC PRODUCT LISTING

the specification of which

__x__ is attached hereto.
____ was filed on _____ as
United States Application Number _____
or PCT International Application Number _____
and was amended on _____.
(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claim(s), as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(a)-(d), of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Priority Prior Foreign Application(s)			Claimed	
(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	Yes	No
(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	Yes	No
(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	Yes	No

I hereby claim the benefit under title 35, United States Code, Section 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below

(Application Number)	Filing Date
(Application Number)	Filing Date

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

(Application Number)	Filing Date	(Status -- patented, pending, abandoned)
(Application Number)	Filing Date	(Status -- patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby appoint Farzad E. Amini, Reg. No. P42,261; Aloysius T. C. AuYeung, Reg. No. 35,432; Amy M. Armstrong, Reg. No. 42,265; William Thomas Babbitt, Reg. No. 39,591; Carol F. Barry, Reg. No. 41,600; Jordan Michael Becker, Reg. No. 39,602; Bradley J. Bereznak, Reg. No. 33,474; Michael A. Bernadicou, Reg. No. 35,934; Roger W. Blakely, Jr., Reg. No. 25,831; Gregory D. Caldwell, Reg. No. 39,926; Kent M. Chen, Reg. No. 39,630; Lawrence M. Cho, Reg. No. 39,942; Yong S. Choi, Reg. No. P43,324; Thomas M. Coester, Reg. No. 39,637; Roland B. Cortes, Reg. No. 39,152; Barbara Bokanov Courtney, Reg. No. 42,442; Michael Anthony DeSanctis, Reg. No. 39,957; Daniel M. De Vos, Reg. No. 37,813; Robert Andrew Diehl, Reg. No. 40,992; Tarek N. Fahmi, Reg. No. 41,402; James Y. Go, Reg. No. 40,621; Richard Leon Gregory, Jr., Reg. No. 42,607; Dinu Gruia, Reg. No. P42,996; David R. Halvorson, Reg. No. 33,395; Thomas A. Hassing, Reg. No. 36,159; Phuong-Quan Hoang, Reg. No. 41,839; Willmore F. Holbrow III, Reg. No. P41,845; George W Hoover II, Reg. No. 32,992; Eric S. Hyman, Reg. No. 30,139; Dag H. Johansen, Reg. No. 36,172; William W. Kidd, Reg. No. 31,772; Michael J. Mallie, Reg. No. 36,591; Andre L. Marais, under 37 C.F.R. § 10.9(b); Paul A. Mendonsa, Reg. No. 42,879; Darren J. Milliken, Reg. 42,004; Chun M. Ng, Reg. No. 36,878; Thinh V. Nguyen, Reg. No. 42,034; Kimberley G. Nobles, Reg. No. 38,255; Michael A. Proksch, Reg. No. 43,021; Babak Redjaian, Reg. No. 42,096; James H. Salter, Reg. No. 35,668; William W. Schaal, Reg. No. 39,018; James C. Scheller, Reg. No. 31,195; Anand Sethuraman, Reg. No. P43,351; Charles E. Shemwell, Reg. No. 40,171; Maria McCormack Sobrino, Reg. No. 31,639; Stanley W. Sokoloff, Reg. No. 25,128; Judith A. Szepesi, Reg. No. 39,393; Vincent P. Tassinari, Reg. No. 42,179; Edwin H. Taylor, Reg. No. 25,129; George G. C. Tseng, Reg. No. 41,355; Lester J. Vincent, Reg. No. 31,460; John Patrick Ward, Reg. No. 40,216; Stephen Warhola, Reg. No. 43,237; Charles T. J. Weigell, Reg. No. 43,398; Steven D. Yates, Reg. No. 42,242; Ben J. Yorks, Reg. No. 33,609; and Norman Zafman, Reg. No. 26,250; my attorneys, and James A. Henry, Reg. No. 41,064; Daniel E. Ovanezian, Reg. No. 41,236; Glenn E. Von Tersch, Reg. No. 41,364;; and Chad R. Walsh, Reg. No. 43,235; my patent agents, of BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP, with offices located at 12400 Wilshire Boulevard, 7th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90025, telephone (310) 207-3800, and James R. Thein, Reg. No. 31,710, my patent attorney; with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith.

Send correspondence to Paul A. Mendonsa (Name of Attorney or Agent), BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP, 12400 Wilshire Boulevard 7th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90025 and direct telephone calls to Paul A. Mendonsa (Name of Attorney or Agent), (503) 684-6200.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Inventor's Signature _____ Date _____

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